

A Review of the New England Fishery Management Process

NEFMC Presentation

April 26, 2011



Outline

- Background
- Methodology
- Findings
- Recommendations
- Conclusions

Background

- **Project Purpose:** Conduct a regional assessment and management review of the fishery management process in New England.
- **Scope:** Focus on the relationships between the New England Fishery Management Council (NEFMC), the Northeast Regional Office (NERO), and the Northeast Fisheries Science Center (NEFSC), but also incorporating review of other factors influencing the effectiveness of those three entities in carrying out their responsibilities under the reauthorized Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act (MSRA). Considered this the first phase of a phased approach. This phase used stakeholder input as the primary source of data.
- **Project Goal:** Provide specific recommendations for additional or reallocation of resources that are needed to meet the MSRA requirements and improve the Northeast's fishery management process and ways to modify existing programs to better meet the NOAA's mission and statutory outcomes of ending overfishing and rebuilding sustainable fisheries.

Methodology

1. Identified stakeholders mainly through referrals
2. Asked high-level questions; drilled down where applicable
3. Focused on the “process” not the “outcomes” of the process
4. Interviews were confidential
5. Conducted two regional visits, and attended multiple Council meetings
6. Themed data
7. Developed recommendations
8. Reviewed prior efforts

Stakeholder Group	# of Interviewees
Industry	59
New England Fishery Management Council	40
Northeast Regional Office	30
Northeast Fisheries Science Center	20
Non-Governmental Organizations	11
National Marine Fisheries Service Headquarters	6
Research Partners	6
Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council	4
Municipal	3
Grand Total	179

Methodology: Caveats

- This report is based on stakeholder input
- We could not speak with everyone
- We made some generalizations
- We have been objective and neutral

Findings: Overall Positives

- All three organizations have competent and dedicated staff
- Although complex and slow, the management process is transparent
- Interaction with the process is good, but not at all stages
- Cooperative research is seen as an effective way to build trust between NMFS and stakeholders
- The Northeast Region Coordinating Committee (NRCC) has the potential to make considerable improvements across the organizations
- Science is helping build confidence in final decisions
- New England's fishery scientists are recognized as being world class
- Role of Sector Managers is improving collaboration between industry and NMFS
- Marine Resources Education Program (MREP) is building needed awareness among stakeholders

Findings: Overall Challenges

- Eliminating redundancies across the entire system
- Building a shared sense of accountability for outcomes among NERO, NEFSC, and NEFMC
- Defining clear, objective criteria for determining the success of management decisions
- Developing a shared vision and strategy to guide the process
- Creating a more welcoming environment at the Council meetings.
- Reducing the negative impacts of lawsuits and politics on the process
- Working to minimize redundancy created by NEPA and the MSRA

Findings: Overall Challenges (Cont.)

- Fostering an environment of service to the industry
- Reestablishing “development of the commercial fishing industry” as part of the NMFS mission
- Streamlining the layers of NOAA review necessary to respond to stakeholder requests
- Improving the quality and timeliness of industry generated data
- Building industry confidence in survey generated data
- Reducing the time required for science to inform the management process
- Simplifying NMFS outreach and communications
- Geography and history compound challenges

Recommendations: Starting in 60 Days

- **Improve Science Collaboration:** Improve collaboration between NEFSC and research partners, and enhance the cooperative research and Research Set-Aside (RSA) programs.
- **Simplify Governance:** Leaders from NERO, NEFSC, NOAA Legal, and the Council should clarify expectations of each group and refresh roles and responsibilities. Explore ways to eliminate unnecessarily redundant programs, activities, and resources among NERO, NEFSC, and the Council at key hand-off points.
- **Maximize Collaboration:** Redesign key engagements to be more collaborative.
- **Simplify Communications:** Redesign communications to meet stakeholders' needs.

Recommendations: Starting in 120 Days

- Scale up the collection and use of socioeconomic data in the FMPs in order to make socioeconomic analysis a more visible and meaningful part of the management process.
- Conduct a comprehensive analysis of all NMFS data systems to identify areas that will improve data gathering, data management, data analysis and data use.
- Conduct a comprehensive analysis of the FMP reporting requirements to find opportunities to eliminate unnecessary reporting/analysis/writing (e.g. Does an EIS need to be created for each FMP?) and decrease the reporting workload on Council and NERO staff.
- Begin the creation of a regional vision and strategic plan to define a new model for collaborating with all stakeholders and to set a future direction for the fishery.

Recommendations: Starting in 120 Days (Cont'd)

- Consider resources to scale up observer program and aging analysis to eliminate that as a bottleneck in the science process.
- Streamline NMFS communications review protocols to improve the response time to stakeholder request and inquiries.
- Design a cost-effective performance management system to track the progress of decisions and capture lessons learned and best practices.

Conclusion

- Fisheries management in New England is beset with problems and challenges that are characteristic of fisheries management – but may be even more acute due to concurrently changing factors of law, management programs and economics.
- Some findings of this report are not new; evidence that there has not been a sufficiently strong commitment to creating a solution, or, that there may be serious institutional or legal barriers standing in the way of implementation
- Improving this working environment will require significant investments of time, resources and ingenuity.
- Stakeholders involved have an expectation that change can and will occur; implementation of the recommendations of this report should be the priority.
- Neither fault for the current problems, nor the responsibility to find solutions, falls on one group alone.
- All stakeholder groups must be engaged and committed to the change.

Discussion